



STATE OF SOUTH DAKOTA
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

KRISTI L. NOEM | GOVERNOR

June 10, 2022

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave. NW
Washington, DC 20500

Through:

Nancy Dragani, Regional Administrator
FEMA Region VIII
Denver Federal Center
PO Box 25267
Denver, CO 80225-0267

Dear Mr. President:

Under the provisions of Section 401 of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, 42 U.S.C. § 5121-5207 (Stafford Act), and implemented by 44 CFR § 206.36, I request you declare a major disaster as a result of a derecho/severe storm, straight-line winds, tornadoes, and flooding event that occurred May 12, 2022 for the South Dakota counties of Aurora, Beadle, Bon Homme, Brookings, Clay, Codington, Day, Deuel, Grant, Hamlin, Hanson, Hutchinson, Kingsbury, Lake, McCook, Miner, Minnehaha, Moody, Roberts, and Turner, as well as the Flandreau Indian and Lake Traverse Reservations.

By the morning of May 12, 2022, all of eastern South Dakota was placed in a moderate risk of severe storms by the Storm Prediction Center. For this region, moderate risks are only issued about 1 to 2 times on average each year. The environment these storms developed in led to the issuance of a "Particularly Dangerous Situation" (PDS) Severe Thunderstorm Watch for much of the Sioux Falls National Weather Service forecast area. This was the first "PDS Watch" issued for any part of the Sioux Falls forecast office since 2015. The watch included the potential of 105 mph winds and a 95% probability of winds greater than 75 mph.

During the afternoon and evening hours of May 12, 2022, a dangerous storm system known as a derecho developed across southern Nebraska and quickly raced northeast across the Northern Plains. Derechos feature widespread wind damage, and this was one of the most extreme

examples on record in terms of the number of measured significant wind gusts. It raced north-northeastward at 50 to 70+ mph, and produced measured straight-line winds of between 60 to over 100 mph. Significant blowing dust was also reported, especially across southeastern South Dakota. Additionally, numerous tornadoes were reported and confirmed.

The most extreme straight-line winds occurred in a 20- to 30-mile-wide path that stretched from near Dante, SD to Clear Lake, SD (Table 1). These storms brought incredible amounts of dust and debris northward, leading to near zero visibility as the storms passed across the area.

Highest Wind Gusts	Location		Highest Wind Gusts	Location
107 mph	2 miles NW of Tripp		90 mph	5 miles WNW of Madison
102 mph	1 mile WNW of Lake Cochrane Rec Area		90 mph	Clear Lake
97 mph	1 mile ENE of Madison		89 mph	2 miles WSW of Gayville
96 mph	3 miles SW of Wentworth		88 mph	2 miles WNW of Scotland
90 mph	2 miles NNW of Huron		88 mph	4 miles S of Salem
There were an additional 23 reports of winds between 75-85 mph				

Table 1: Highest recorded wind gusts in South Dakota (source: NWS Aberdeen and Sioux Falls)

In addition to the straight-line wind reports, a preliminary number of 14 tornadoes have been documented across northeast South Dakota. Some of the worst tornado damage occurred in Hamlin and Deuel counties. Between the two counties, a combined six tornadoes have been documented, and three of those have been rated as significant EF2 tornadoes.

Regionally, this event ranks at the top in the nation in terms of number of significant (75+ mph) wind gusts. The preliminary number of significant severe wind reports (75+ mph) across the northern plains on May 12, 2022 is at 64, which ties for the most reports in a single day. The preliminary number of total severe wind reports (58+ mph) is at 424.

South Dakota's energy lifeline was significantly impacted by the string of storms during this incident period. Between the rural electric cooperatives and private energy companies, nearly 70,000 customers experienced power outages. Some of those customers were without power for four days. Mutual aid and contractor support was coordinated by the South Dakota Rural Electric Association and private energy providers to bring in additional power crews to help restore the power as quickly as possible. Communication lifelines were also affected from the power outages and some residents were without telephone and internet communication during the power outage.

Widespread damage, including downed power lines, overturned semi-trucks, vehicle crashes, uprooted or snapped trees, and destroyed traffic control signs, was reported. An EF2 tornado,

with wind speeds estimated at 120 mph, passed through the town of Castlewood. Several structures and homes sustained significant damage including the Castlewood school. The final week of classes were held in local churches. Local officials are evaluating the building to determine if it will be able to partially resume classes in August. They are also exploring other options for relocating classes if the building cannot be utilized in August. The worst hit residences in Castlewood were damaged so severely they became uninhabitable. Another farmstead south of Gary was devastated by a tornado. At this location wind speeds are estimated at 135 mph. The third EF2 tornado did substantial damage to a dairy farm near Estelline.

Our Transportation lifeline was also impacted. Numerous sections of highways and county roads were temporarily closed throughout the impacted area due to debris and/or damaged vehicles blocking the roadway, including Interstates 29 and 90. Fourteen miles of Interstate 29 were closed for approximately four hours and 13 miles of Interstate 90 were closed for approximately eight hours. Flooding was reported on county roads in northeastern South Dakota. County and state transportation buildings and storage facilities also suffered significant damage from the storms. The communities of Aurora and Ramona were without water for several hours. Successful search and rescue efforts took place in Castlewood, Gary, and Salem to locate residents trapped by debris. Additionally, a nursing home in Salem with 30 residents suffered structural damage and was evacuated to a local shelter. American Red Cross-supported shelters were opened in Madison and Webster, and locally supported shelters were available in Flandreau, Salem, and Trent.

Tragically, two individuals in Minnehaha County lost their lives during the storm. One was due to a tree falling on an occupied vehicle and the second due to flying debris entering a vehicle. Several injuries were also reported across the region as a direct result of this storm system.

The storms also caused hazardous materials releases across the impacted areas. In Salem, a release of 5,000 gallons of diesel fuel occurred following storm damage to the facility. A fuel plant in Aurora lost power, causing the entire plant to go offline and release hazardous air pollutants. A transformer in Lake County was damaged and leaked approximately 100 gallons of transformer mineral oil.

Nineteen state parks in South Dakota reported damage to trees and/or park structures (such as cabins, docks, and picnic shelters) from this storm system. Lake Herman State Park in Lake County and Oakwood Lakes State Park in Brookings County received the most damage, with a combined total of approximately 600 trees downed or damaged, plus damage to numerous park structures. These recreational destinations have a profound effect on our tourism industry, which is one of our top industries in South Dakota.

We know our rural communities will continue to feel the impacts of this disaster in the future. Agriculture is an economic driver in South Dakota. Agriculture contributes \$32.5 billion annually to South Dakota's economy. As is true of producers across the country, our agriculture community is humble and resilient. History has shown they do not report losses and quietly

deal with the effects of storms. Losses are often far more significant than we hear about. More importantly, these effects have an emotional toll on the agricultural community, which has already faced low prices and market uncertainty. South Dakota State University's Extension Service gathered a comprehensive list of recovery resources to offer to producers in the state, such as information on tetanus, wind damage to agricultural buildings, salvaging feed grain, and livestock loss. Local US Department of Agriculture Farm Service Agency offices are also disseminating information about the Emergency Conservation Program and Livestock Indemnity Program to area producers. While these efforts are currently ongoing, we will need federal resources to sustain these efforts in the long-term.

In response to this derecho/severe storm, straight-line winds, tornadoes, and flooding event, and in accordance with federal law, I have taken appropriate action under state law and directed the execution of the State Emergency Operations Plan on May 13, 2022 and declared a State of Emergency to exist. Affected counties and reservations also have issued disaster declarations for their jurisdictions. The South Dakota Office of Emergency Management (SDOEM) coordinated the following state agency resources to aid local government response to the severe storms:

- SDOEM provided a pump to assist with flood response efforts and to pump water from a storm system to a lake in Webster.
- SD Wildland Fire provided hand crews to assist with public property debris cleanup in the town of Winfred, at Lake Herman and Oakwood Lakes State Parks, and at the South Dakota State Fairgrounds in Huron.
- SD National Guard had 135 personnel on State Active Duty to clear debris from streets for traffic movement in Madison and Ramona. Personnel were also used to provide security around the disaster sites in Castlewood and supplement local law enforcement efforts.
- SD National Guard provided generators to power a water tower in Castlewood and a wastewater lift station in Lake Norden.
- SD Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources provided technical assistance to communities with hazardous materials releases, debris management questions, and boil water orders as a result of storm damage.
- SD Department of Transportation assisted with debris clearance at state parks and on highways.
- SD Department of Transportation provided a front-end loader and grapple fork attachments to the City of Brookings to assist with debris cleanup.
- SD Department of Social Services is providing crisis counseling to residents with behavioral health needs. This will be a long-term issue that will be continually monitored.
- SDOEM coordinated and continues to coordinate South Dakota Voluntary Organizations Agencies Active in Disasters (VOAD) resources. The following VOAD resources were utilized during this event:
 - Shelters were opened by the American Red Cross in Lake and Day counties.

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- The American Red Cross and Salvation Army assisted with feeding and providing relief supplies throughout the affected areas. Hundreds of meals were provided.
- Latter Day Saints Charities, Knights of Columbus, Mennonite Disaster Services, Christian Aid Ministries, and Samaritans Purse assisted residents with tree and debris cleanup and removal throughout the affected areas.

On May 20, 2022, I requested from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) a joint federal, state, and local preliminary damage assessment of the impacted areas for public assistance damage. The preliminary damage assessment of public infrastructure for all 20 counties and 2 reservations was conducted June 6 through June 9, 2022. The assessment confirmed 20 counties and 2 reservations suffered severe impacts to public infrastructure. The details of the Public Assistance preliminary damage assessment are attached in Enclosure B.

Total public assistance damages for the 20 counties and 2 reservations are estimated to be at \$6,733,541.08 for a statewide per capita impact of \$7.59. The statewide per capita impact of \$7.59 is above the most recent statewide per capita impact indicator of \$1.63, effective October 1, 2021. Counties incurred damages ranging from \$4.24 per capita in Minnehaha County to a devastating \$164.47 per capita in Lake County.

The State has six other open Presidential disaster declarations and is still working through the recovery process from these disasters with FEMA. As you understand, recovery from disasters takes years after the initial event to fully recover physically, emotionally, and financially. The costs associated with this disaster combined with the six other open declarations increases the State's financial stress and further stretches our capabilities if federal assistance is not provided.

Significant personnel and equipment on the state and local levels have been dedicated to recovering from the derecho/severe storm, straight-line winds, tornadoes, and flooding event. I have further determined this event is of such severity and magnitude that effective response is beyond the capabilities of the state and the affected local governments, and supplemental federal assistance is necessary. I do not anticipate the need for direct federal assistance at this time.

I respectfully request you declare a major disaster for the State of South Dakota as a result of this derecho/severe storm, straight-line winds, tornadoes, and flooding event. I am specifically requesting Public Assistance for the following counties: Aurora, Beadle, Bon Homme, Brookings, Clay, Codington, Day, Deuel, Grant, Hamlin, Hanson, Hutchinson, Kingsbury, Lake, McCook, Miner, Minnehaha, Moody, Roberts, and Turner, as well as the Flandreau Indian and Lake Traverse Reservations.

On June 10, 2022, I issued an Executive Proclamation declaring a disaster in South Dakota. Preliminary estimates of the types and amount of assistance needed under the Stafford Act are detailed in Enclosure B. I certify for this major disaster, state and local governments and

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private-non-profit organizations will assume the applicable non-federal share of costs required by the Stafford Act.

I am also requesting the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program statewide. South Dakota has experienced great success in the past with mitigation. This incident presents us with another opportunity to mitigate future damages. The State is committed to mitigation projects which lessen the impacts of future disasters. This is evidenced by our approved enhanced Statewide Multi-Hazard Mitigation Plan which prioritizes mitigation projects. The enhanced Statewide Multi-Hazard Mitigation Plan was approved on April 18, 2019.

I have designated Ms. Tina Titze as the State Coordinating Officer for this request. She will work with the Federal Emergency Management Agency to provide further information or justification on my behalf.

Again, Mr. President, I sincerely appreciate your consideration of my request and your willingness to assist South Dakota's citizens. South Dakotans pride themselves on being a hardy group of citizens and we pull together to help one another, especially in times of disaster. While local officials and first responders have been personally impacted, they still have been available to assist their citizens in this time of need. The impact of this event will be felt in these communities well into the future. However, with the availability of federal assistance, combined with the state, local, and voluntary assistance provided, it will help individuals, businesses, and government inch closer to recovering from this disaster.

Sincerely,



Kristi Noem
Governor

cc: Senator Mike Rounds
Senator John Thune
Representative Dusty Johnson

Enclosures:

OMB No. 1660-0009/FEMA Form 010-0-13

Enclosure B: Public Assistance

Enclosure C: Estimated Assistance from Other Federal Agency Programs